2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

be successful in the field of village politics. From there he can move into national politics.

Traditionally, age was an important determinant of status. Age meant wisdom, experience and position at the head of a large family. The deference accorded to age is preserved in the proverb 'Heed well the words of the elders' (*Kliem ix-xih żomm fih*). But in a society where teenage sons work as skilled labourers, clerks and teachers while their fathers still farm or dig ditches, and where schoolboys read letters, newspapers and voting instructions to their illiterate parents, the words of the elders are often not heard. The social and cultural gap between the old and the young is wider now than it has been for many generations. Today leadership in the villages is in relatively young hands. Old parish registers support the memories of the present generation of elders that this has not always been the case.

Village sons who are professionals often become presidents of their local band clubs. Very often they no longer live in their native villages. Most marry town-bred girls from professional families who do not wish to leave their urban surroundings and friends to live amongst people they regard as their inferiors in every sense. Though village-born professionals find it convenient for business purposes to live in the town, most lawyers continue to reside in their villages, even though their social life and many of their business interests are oriented away from the community, they normally enjoy great prestige. This works to enlarge their professional clientele. These assets can easily be converted into political support, and many village doctors and lawyers have gone successfully into politics.

Dr. Farrugia of Kortin, the town's only lawyer and its leading citizen, is a case in point. A native of Kortin, he is the son of old Manwel, the retired teacher who runs the Good Friday procession. Of a relatively modest background, he married the daughter of the former lawyer in the village, and took over the latter's large practice when he died. Past president of both the football and social clubs, a member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, he has been president of the band club for many years. He is also a successful politician at the national level.

Frequently the government District Medical Officers are the only professionals resident in the villages in which they work.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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Partly because of the temporary nature of their assignments, but also because they are usually city-bred, they generally keep themselves aloof from the people amongst whom they work. With but few exceptions, they take little or no part in the social life of the communities to which they are assigned. But they are nevertheless respected figures. Where they are tolerant of village customs, not too mercenary, and take a patronal interest in the personal problems of their clients, they will have, in addition to prestige, a large personal following. This has enabled a number of former District Medical Officers to stand successfully for elected office.

School teachers are another group of people with high prestige. Every village and almost every hamlet in Malta and Gozo now has a government school. Headmasters usually live outside the villages in which they work. They begin their careers in the small rural villages and move into the larger and more important schools as they gain experience and seniority. They are rarely in a village long enough to be asked to take part in its social life. Village-born teachers, on the other hand, normally teach in their home villages, where they often occupy important offices in the associations. But even where he no longer resides in his place of birth the teacher or headmaster, as a village son with high prestige, is often asked to take an active part in its social life. The president of the St. Roque Band Club in Farrug, for example, is headmaster of the primary school in a neighbouring village, where he has lived since he married there more than forty years ago. He has been a member of the club's committee for most of that time, and its president for the last twenty years. Until two years ago he was also procurator of the Confraternity of St. Roque.

VI

The structure of authority in the villages of Malta and Gozo, because of the importance of offices and associations which are either focused on or articulated with the Church, bears a certain superficial resemblance to the civil/religious hierarchy which has been described in Mexican villages.[1] But it differs significantly; it is neither a hierarchy, nor is it formally related to the structure of government.

[1] See, for instance, Fernando Camara, 'Religious and Political Organization', in *Heritage of Conquest*, Sol Tax, ed. (Glencoe, The Free Press, 1952), *passim*.

[Village of Mġarr]

Building went ahead slowly on the immense construction as costs were defrayed by private subscription in kind and in money, and the villagers were themselves responsible for much of the labouring work. Money and farm produce of every variety was given towards the cost which, in 1939, had passed £10,000 (R/54 - 12.8.1939); this in a parish which even ten years later had no more than 2,218 people (R/167 - 1948).

With the growth of Mġarr, assistant priests were attached to the Parish, notably Father (later Monsignor) Edgar Salamone, who went to the village in 1920 and became Parish Priest a decade later. The work of this one priest not only pays him personal tribute but illustrates the way in which Mġarr acquired the characteristics and features possessed by other villages of much longer standing in the Islands, with the Church itself as the prime consideration and focus of energy and resources. Mgr. Salamone was "sickened by the ignorance and backwardness of the people of Mġarr"[15] and set about establishing some sort of schooling in the village. He acquired premises, used at week-ends by the part-time village barber, and opened a school in 1920 for about 40 children and adults. Three years later a Government elementary school was opened (19.9.1923) and support for this still novel feature of the village grew fast enough for nearly all children to be attending when the Compulsory Attendance Act was passed in 1926.

At this time the health of the villagers was cared for by a Dispensary which opened once a week and by Mgr. Salamone himself. A statement in the Malta Legislative Assembly of 1933 observed that the Priest of Mġarr kept "a medicine chest of his own and people used to call on him at all hours of the day and night. He used to pack up his medical kit and go to anyone's bedside, whenever he was called for" (R/291, p.6). As in all things the villagers turned to their Priest in difficulty or trouble whether spiritual, medical or social, as had been the custom for centuries. In 1933, however, the first medical officer for Mġarr began his duties in the village, and another of the traditional functions of the Priest passed to specialist hands.

After this, interest was turned again to building and the spacious esplanade in front of the Church was laid out in 1935, followed by a nearby construction to house the Police Station, Post Office, Government Dispensary and the District Medical Officer. Once again the villagers themselves were responsible for a great deal of the building work, as they were in the case of the Church which continued to grow until its completion and dedication in 1948 - at a total cost of some £16,000[15]. By the mid-thirties Mġarr had